

Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist; Mayor Rick Baker of St. Petersburg, FL; Kitty Martinez, wife of Florida senatorial candidate Mel R. Martinez; country music entertainer Lee Greenwood; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

**Remarks in New Port Richey, Florida**  
October 19, 2004

**The President.** Thank you all for coming. If you're looking for sunshine, Florida is the place to come. I'm looking for votes, and Florida is the place to come. Thank you all for coming out. I'm here to ask for not only your vote, I'm here to ask for your help. Get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. And when you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a stronger America, a safer America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I've got a lot of reasons why you ought to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will have 4 more years as the First Lady. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. She's giving a lot of speeches, and the American people see a warm, compassionate, strong First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. Now, look, I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [Laughter] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. [Laughter] I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud of my brother Jeb. What a great Governor for Florida. I appreciate the strength and compassion he showed during the hurricanes. Florida showed that out of adversity can come good, neighbors loving neighbors, people helping people who hurt. We'll continue to do everything we can to help the people of Florida get back on their feet.

By the way, brother Marvin is with us too. [Applause] Yes. We love our family. And I love campaigning with my family.

I want to thank Sam for his service to the United States of America. He was in the first

gulf war. He's in the second incursion into Iraq. And our country is more secure because of his service.

I want to thank Sheriff Bob White for joining us today. Sheriff, thanks. Appreciate it. I want to thank Daron Norwood, the country music singer, for being with us today.

I want to thank Al Cardenas and all the grassroots activists who are here today. Thank you for putting up the signs. Thank you for making the phone calls. Thank you for working the polls. With your help, we will carry Florida again and win a great victory in November.

In the last few years, the American people have gotten to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I get that from Mother. [Laughter] They know that I occasionally mangle the English language. [Laughter] I get that from my father. [Laughter] They also know that I tell you exactly what I'm going to do, and I keep my word.

I enjoyed our debates. They showed the big differences between my opponent and me. We have different records. We have different views of the future. My record is one of reforming education, lowering taxes, providing prescription drug coverage for our seniors, improving homeland protections, and waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate.

The Senator's record of 20 years is out of the mainstream. Instead of articulating a vision or a positive agenda for the future, the Senator is relying on a litany of complaints and old-style scare tactics. As proven by his record and a series of contradictions in this campaign, my opponent will say anything he thinks will benefit him politically at the time.

I will do what I've said I will do. We will keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors. We will not have a draft; we will have an all-volunteer army. On November 2d, the people of America will reject the politics of fear and vote for an agenda of hope and opportunity and security for every American.

When I came into office, the stock market had been in decline for 6 months. And then we had a recession. To help families and to get this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word, and the results are clear. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at a rate faster than any major industrialized nation. Homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. We added 1.9 million new jobs since August of 2003. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in Florida is 4.5 percent. This economy is moving forward, and we're not going to go back to the old days of tax and spend.

To make sure jobs are here in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. We need to reduce the regulations on our job creators. We need to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that hurt the small businesses.

Listen, to keep jobs here, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It encourages conservation. It encourages the use of renewables. It encourages clean coal technology. It encourages environmentally friendly ways to explore for natural gas. We will not explore off the coast of Florida. What I'm telling you is in order to keep jobs here, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To keep jobs here, we've got to reject economic isolationism. I believe in free trade. I believe in fair trade. I know Americans compete with anytime—anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

To keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. My opponent has his own history on the economy.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built the record of a Senator from Massachusetts. *[Laughter]* He voted to increase taxes 98 times in his 20 years. That's about five times a year. I would call that a pattern—*[laughter]*—a predictable pattern. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

Now he's promising not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. He said that with a straight face. *[Laughter]* The problem with that is, to keep that promise you'd have to break all the other ones. See, he's promised over \$2.2 trillion in new spending. That's with a "T." In order to pay for it, he said, well, all he's going to do is

tax the rich. You can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$2.2 trillion. There is a gap between what he's promised and what he can raise. Guess who generally fills the gap? You do.

Let me tell you what else is wrong with taxing the rich. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to slip the bill and to pass it on to you. We're not going to let Senator Kerry tax you; we're going to carry Florida and win a great victory on November the 2d.

When I came into office, our public schools had been waiting decades for hopeful reform. Fortunately, you had a Governor here in Florida who enacted hopeful reform. Too many of our children were shuffled through school without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability to our schools and to end the soft bigotry of low expectations. I kept my word. We're seeing results. Children are making sustained gains in reading and math. We're closing achievement gaps all over this country, and we're not going to go back to the days of low expectations and mediocrity.

When I came into office, we had a problem in Medicare. Medicine was changing; Medicare was not. For example, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. It was not fair to our seniors. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors. I kept my word.

We're moving forward on health care. There is more to do. We need to make sure health care is available and affordable. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get health care. We will make sure that poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families so they can get the health care they need.

To make sure health care is affordable, we must recognize that most of the uninsured work for small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To help our workers get health care, we should allow small businesses to join together so

they can buy insurance at the same discounts as big companies get to do. We will expand health savings accounts so workers and small businesses are able to pay lower premiums and people can save tax-free in a health care account they call their own.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we must do something about the junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and running good doctors out of practice. There is a clear difference in this campaign. My opponent has consistently voted against medical liability reform. I stand for medical liability reform, and I know I can work with the next Senator from Florida, Mel Martinez, to get that reform done.

The Senator has a health care proposal of his own, a plan for bigger and more intrusive Government. The other day, he tried to tell Americans that when it comes to his health care plan, and I quote, "The Government has nothing to do with it." [Laughter] I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] The facts are that 8 out of 10 people who get health care under Senator Kerry's plan would be placed on a Government program. He says his plan would help small businesses. Yet, groups that studied this plan concluded it was an overpriced albatross that would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

I have a different view. I want to help our small businesses, not saddle them with a bunch of Government rules. The choice is clear. My opponent wants to move in the direction of Government-run health care. I believe health decisions should be made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC. He can run, but he cannot hide.

I've set out policies that move our country toward a more hopeful and optimistic vision. I believe our country can and must be an ownership society. There's an old saying: No one ever washes a rental car—[laughter]—a lot of wisdom in that statement. When you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country. That's why we're encouraging entrepreneurship. Every time a small business is started, someone is achieving the American Dream.

We're encouraging health savings accounts so people have the security of owning and managing their own health care. We will con-

tinue to encourage homeownership in America. I love it when somebody opens the door where they live and says, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In a new term, we'll take the next step to build an ownership society by strengthening Social Security. Let me talk about Social Security right quick. In 2000, people traveled this State saying, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks."

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** Our seniors must remember, you got your checks. You will continue to get their checks, no matter what they try to tell you. And baby boomers, we're in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. The job of the President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future generations and future Presidents. To make sure Social Security is around when our children grow up, we must allow younger workers to save some of their own payroll taxes in a personal savings account that earns better interest, a personal savings account they call their own and an account the Government cannot take away.

When it comes to Social Security, my opponent wants to maintain the status quo. That is not leadership. He's against these Social Security reforms. He's against just about every other reform that gives more authority and control to the people. On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools without accountability to higher taxes, he takes the side of more bureaucracy and more Government.

There is a word for that attitude. It is called liberalism. He dismisses that as a label. He must have seen it differently when he told a newspaper, "I am a liberal, and I'm proud of it."

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** The nonpartisan National Journal did a study and named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That takes a lot of hard work. [Laughter]

I have a different record and a different philosophy. I do not believe in big Government, and I do not believe that Government should be indifferent. That is called compassionate conservatism. I believe in policies

that empower people to improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe we must continue to help men and women find the schools—skills and tools to prosper in a time of change. And so we're helping all Americans find dignity and independence. And I will continue to lead our country for 4 more years with that philosophy in mind.

**Audience members.** Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

**The President.** In this time of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In a time of change, we must support the institutions that gives our lives purpose and direction, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is plenty clear. He says he supports the institution of marriage but voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against a ban on the practice of partial-birth abortion.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** He's described the Reagan years as a time of moral darkness.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Our strategy is clear. We are defending the homeland. We are reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We are transforming our military. The All-Volunteer Army will remain an all-volunteer army. We are staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have

to face them here at home. We will spread freedom and liberty. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Today, because we acted, Afghanistan is free and is an ally on the war on terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice.

We're standing with the peoples of a free Afghanistan and Iraq. I want you to remind your children about the historic moment that took place when the Afghan citizens went to vote. It was all but 3 years ago that these people lived under the brutal, brutal reign of the Taliban. Young girls couldn't go to school. Mothers were taken and whipped in the public square because they didn't toe the line of these ideologues of hate. But because we acted in our self-defense, millions went to the polls. The first voter in Afghan—in the Afghanistan Presidential election was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is on the march.

There will be elections in Iraq in January. Think about how far that country has come from the days of mass graves and torture chambers and the brutal reign of a tyrant who hated America. It's important that freedom be on the march. We're more secure when societies are free. Free societies will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them. Free societies will be peaceful societies. Freedom means America will be more secure.

And so our mission is clear. We will help the people in these countries, in Afghanistan and Iraq, train their armies, train their police, so they can do the hard work of defending

freedom. We will help the countries get on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

I want to thank those who wear our uniform. I want to thank the veterans who have set such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who are with us today.

Under my leadership and working with the Congress, our Nation is keeping our commitments to those who serve and to their families. We've increased basic pay in the military by 21 percent. We've increased health benefits and Federal support for schools on our bases. We've reduced the out-of-pocket expenses for off-base housing to zero for our military families. We're supporting our Guard and our Reserves. We're spending 14 billion for construction and maintenance for Guard and Reserve facilities. We've extended military health care to our Guard and Reserve families. We're making sure that our troops have what they need in order to complete their missions.

And that's why I went to the Congress and requested \$87 billion of funding in September of 2003. And the support in the Congress was strong, except for 12 Senators voted against funding for our troops——

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** ——2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** When you're out rounding up the vote, remind the people of this startling statistic: There were only four Members of the Senate who voted to authorize the use of force and voted against supporting our troops in combat—only four—two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** So they asked him about the vote, and he said, in perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it."

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** Sunday was the one-year anniversary of Senator Kerry's vote against funding for our troops. My opponent's many and conflicting positions on this issue are a case study into why his contradictions call

into question his credibility and his ability to lead our Nation.

In September 2003, as the \$87 billion funding package was being debated, Senator Kerry, on national TV, said it would be "irresponsible to abandon our troops by voting against it." That's what he said. Just one month later, he did exactly the opposite. And so you wonder why. What happened to change the Senator's mind so abruptly in one month? Well, his opponent in the Democrat primary, Howard Dean, was gaining ground as an antiwar candidate. Senator Kerry apparently decided supporting the troops, even while they were in harm's way, was not as important as shoring up his own political position.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** At a time of great threat to our country, at a time of great challenge in the world, the Commander in Chief must stand on principle, not on the shifting sands of political convenience.

His vote against supporting our troops in combat is part of a pattern. He opposed the B-1 bomber. He opposed the B-2 stealth bomber. He opposed modernization of the F-14D, all of which helped us secure our country in Afghanistan and Iraq. He opposed the Apache helicopter. He opposed the Patriot missile system. My opponent has built a 20-year record of military weakness. He can run from his record——

**Audience members.** But he can't hide!

**The President.** In our debate, Senator Kerry proposed we should pass a "global test" before we defend ourselves.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** I'm not making that up. That's exactly what he said. I was standing right there. [Laughter] The problem with a "global test" is the Senator cannot ever pass it. In 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries throughout the world joined our coalition. Yet even after United Nations approval, Senator Kerry voted against authorization for the use of force.

**Audience members.** Boo-o-o!

**The President.** If that didn't pass a "global test," nothing will pass a "global test." Listen,

I'll continue to build strong alliances. We'll work with our friends and allies. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. After World War II, after we defeated the Japanese, Harry Truman believed in the transformational power of liberty to convert an enemy into an ally. A lot of people doubted that. A lot of people wondered whether an enemy could ever become a democracy. But there were strong beliefs. And as a result of that belief, today, I sit down at the table with the head of a former enemy, Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, talking about the peace we all want.

Someday, a duly elected leader of Iraq will be sitting down with an American President, talking about the peace in the greater Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their freedom. I believe women in the Middle East want to live in a free society. I believe mothers and dads in the Middle East want their children to grow up in a free and peaceful world. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve and clear vision and a deep faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. I will never forget the workers in hardhats who were yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I'll never forget the man that grabbed me by my arm and looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your great State, I made a pledge that if you gave me

a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. at Sims Park. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Bob White, sheriff, Pasco County, FL; Al Cardenas, former chair, Republican Party of Florida; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

## Remarks in The Villages, Florida

October 19, 2004

**The President.** Thank you all for coming today. I am proud to be the first sitting President ever to have visited The Villages. The other ones missed out on a lot. Thanks for having me. Thanks for coming. This is a huge crowd, for which I am grateful. I told Jeb it looks like a beautiful day in The Villages. He said, "It's always a beautiful day in The Villages."

I'm traveling your State to ask for the vote. I think you got to get out amongst the people and say, I want your vote. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back into office. I also want your help. You need to go to your friends and neighbors. Tell them we have a duty in our free society to vote. When you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

My one regret is that Laura is not with me today.

**Audience members.** Aw-w-w!

**The President.** I know, that's generally the reaction. [*Laughter*] I'm going to give you some reasons, as I said, to put me in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. When I met her again—see, we went to the seventh grade together in San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. When I met her again, she was a public school librarian. I said, "Will you marry me?" She said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you got a deal."